

THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF GRACE

NO. 1665

A SERMON
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*“That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace
in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”
Ephesians 2:7.*

FROM this verse it is clear that Paul fully expected the gospel of the grace of God to be preached in the ages to come. He had no notion of a temporary gospel to develop into a better, but he was assured that the same gospel would be preached to the end of the dispensation. Nor this alone, for as I take it, he looked to the perpetuity of the gospel, not only through the ages which have already elapsed since the first advent of our blessed Lord, but throughout the ages after He shall have come a second time. Eternity itself will not improve upon the gospel. When all the saints shall be gathered home they shall still talk and speak of the wonders of Jehovah's love in Christ Jesus. And in the golden streets they shall stand up and tell what the Lord has done for them to listening crowds of angels, and principalities, and powers. Paul did not believe in the quenching of the light of the testimony of grace, but expected that throughout the ages to come it would burn on with the selfsame brilliance. This I infer from the fact that he looked upon the believing Ephesians and himself as having been converted in the dawn of Christianity, on purpose, that to later ages they might serve as specimens of what the gospel can do. He looked upon these Ephesians, newly drawn out from the cesspool of idolatry, in the same light as he looked upon himself when he said that, the Lord had shown towards him all long-suffering, for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on His name. Paul and these Ephesians, and all those early Christians, were types to us of what God can do by the gospel and of what He will continue to do until the present dispensation shall close. From this statement we may gather with most sure logic that the gospel is altogether unalterable, for if its results 1,800 years ago are to serve us as proofs of its power, then it must be the same gospel. It is clear that the converts of the first century would not be to us any kind of testimony to the power of the gospel as it now exists among us if meanwhile there had been a change in the gospel itself. At best such facts could only show what the old-fashioned gospel did in its day, but we could not infer from them what a new-fangled gospel will now accomplish. Paul did not at all anticipate any removal of the old landmarks. He held it forth that the same results would follow in all ages from the preaching of the same gospel with the same power from heaven, and therefore he regarded the first converts as pledges and proofs to all succeeding ages of what the gospel could achieve. Hold, my brethren, to that gospel which has been delivered unto you, which we have received by the Spirit of God through the teaching of Christ and of His apostles, and you shall yet see repeated in your midst the same things which were worked in those early days. Those who will, may drink the new wine of the modern vintage, my conviction is that the old is better.

Learn also from this language of Paul, that every age is a gainer by those which preceded it. I have smiled often in this place at the conceit of this nineteenth century, which holds up its head among the ages as far excelling them all, though if it knew itself it would sing to a more modest tune. But now I will moderate my tone, and admit that this century is superior to all the ages that have been before it—superior in this one respect, that it has received by the lapse of time the fullest and most repeated evidence of the gospel's power. Whereas in the second century men could only refer to the experience of the saints during one hundred years, we have at this hour the accumulated evidence of almost nineteen thousand years, and all this is put in evidence as proof of what grace can do. Whereas in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries men had the accumulated personal testimonies of those who had till then, believed in Christ, and had been saved thereby, we, upon whom the ends of the earth have come, have now far larger evidence, because the time has supplied us with a greater cloud of witnesses. For nearly two

thousand years this gospel has been preached among men. And every year has brought fresh trophies to its power, every day, I might say, is now producing evidence of its divine power. We have not today, dear friends, to begin to test the gospel. The ice is broken for us, experiments have been made so frequently that we have now entered upon another stage. It is not ours to analyze the bread, but to feed upon it. We have not today to inquire, "Can we ford the stream?" Lo, these nineteen centuries the hosts of God have gone through the flood in safety, and we have but to join their ranks and follow where they lead the way. Surrounded by evidence that is altogether overwhelming, we behold the gospel of Jesus going forth, conquering and to conquer. We hear from ten thousand times ten thousand voices the cry, "Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God." We cannot cease to proclaim the mercy of God as displayed in the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, for infallible assurances strengthen our confidence and set our hearts on fire.

The multitudes of converts in past time make known to us in these ages that there is salvation, no, more, that this salvation is to be had, for they obtained it. No, further, that it is to be had upon the terms that God has laid down of simply believing in Jesus Christ, for they obtained it in that way and in none other. Doubt ought now to be out of the question. Every needy, trembling sinner should hasten away to the refuge supplied by Jesus. Because so many have been to Him with success, because He has never rejected any, because He has saved to the uttermost all those that have come to Him, therefore sinful men ought eagerly and unquestioningly to come at once, and put their confidence in the Lamb of God. Then will God's purpose, as described in the text, be accomplished, that to the ages to come should be made known by all who have tasted of His kindness the exceeding riches of His grace toward men in Christ Jesus the Savior.

This morning I have a text before me which is a great deal too full for me. I can never draw out all its supplies. I have gone around the walls of this city text, I have counted its towers and marked well its bulwarks, and I am utterly unable to express myself by reason of joyous astonishment. I feel as if I must sit down and lose myself in adoration. I am a poor dumb dog over such a theme. I believe that if I were shut up to preach for twelve months from this text, I should not be straitened for matter, but rather, when I had finished the fifty-two Sabbaths, I should be eager to enter upon another year's consideration of the same topic. Here is a vast and fruitful country—a land of hills and valleys, a land of fountains and brooks of water—who shall spy it out and set the bounds thereof? I shall try to exhibit a cluster from Eshcol, but the whole land I cannot show you, it behooves you to journey there for yourselves. It is a right royal subject—"The exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Whitefield and Wesley might preach the gospel better than I do, but they could not preach a better gospel.

I shall preach with the longing desire that others may be enticed to come and taste of the dainties of Christ's marriage-feast. To this end I shall rehearse the loving kindnesses of the Lord. Oh that the Holy Spirit may help *me*, and draw *you*. We begin with—

I. THE KINDNESS OF THE LORD TOWARD US IN CHRIST JESUS. What kindness He displayed in *choosing such sinners* as we were. These Ephesians had been most superstitious idolaters. You know how loudly they shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." There was no preparedness in them to cast away their idols and to worship the great Invisible. There was nothing in them to draw them towards the light that shines in the Christ of God. They were far off, as Paul says, having no hope, and really and truly without God in the world, and yet these were the very men whom the exceeding riches of God's grace brought out of darkness into the marvelous light. They were "dead in trespasses and sins." They walked according to the course of the world, according to the prince of the power of the air. They fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were sunk in all manner of loathsome lusts and vices, and yet the grace of God came to men of Ephesus, and called out a church to show forth the praises of God. Now, what were we, my brethren? We were not idolaters, nor sunk in all the degradation of Ephesus, but we were all sinners in some fashion or other. All the sheep went astray, though each one followed a different way, all took the downward road, and we among them. We, to the utmost of our power, fulfilled the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. We did evil even as we could. If it had not been for the restraints of education and the checks of our surroundings, I know not into what crimes, we would have not plunged. It is a happy circumstance for some of us that God met with us very early, or

else we would have been swept away by the torrents of our youthful passions into the worst possible vices. We always had a strong will and a firm purpose, and courage equal to any daring. These qualities under the devil's influence would soon have forced for us a passage to hell. If we had been left to sow our wild oats, what a crop we would have had long before this. Thanks be to God for His preventing love! Alas, some, left to wander far, were allowed to prove in their lives, the sin which dwelt in them, and what a wonder of grace, what a miracle of love, that God should have selected them, after all, and brought them near to Himself. Dear brothers and sisters, I will not enlarge upon this, for this is a point for your private meditations. Shut yourselves up in your closets and think of what you were and what you would have been if it had not been for the kindness of God toward you in Christ Jesus. Forget not that the Lord has shown this kindness toward us in order that others like us may be induced to believe in the same kindness. Are any here the children of pious parents, and have you done violence to your consciences? After the same fashion did many of us terribly rebel, and yet the Lord has had mercy upon us. Have some of you fallen into the lusts of the flesh, and followed after the pleasures of sin, and thus defiled yourselves greatly? Do not despair of pardon, for there are some here who tearfully remember how the God of pardons forgave them after they had fallen into the same sins. Whatever form your transgression may take, God has saved others who before fell into similar sins, in order that in them He might make known to you His willingness to clasp you to His bosom, and to cast your sins behind His back. No doctrine, however clearly stated, will ever have such influence over men as living examples, but when we can say of this one and of the other, "These were great offenders. These were open sinners. These were grievous transgressors, but they obtained mercy," we do in effect say to all of the same character, "Come, and you shall not be refused. Leave your sin as they have done. Loathe it as they do. Trust in Jesus as they have been taught to do, and you shall find equal mercy with them, and shall rejoice in the common salvation." The kindness of God toward *us*—how I delight to dwell on the word "*us*," then to take it up and acknowledge my own personal share in it—the kindness of God toward *me*. Do this, my brethren, and then go and display to others the kindness of the Lord toward your own souls.

But our attention is called not only to the persons whom God chose, but to His kindness displayed in *the gracious acts which He has done towards them*. Mark the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us. What has He done for us? He chose us before He lit the stars, those torches of the sky. He wrote our names upon the heart and hands of Christ before He laid the foundations of the hills. In the fullness of time He gave Christ for us, even that blessed Christ of whom we say, "Who loved me and gave Himself for me." He made with us in Christ Jesus a covenant ordered in all things and sure, which shall stand fast when all created things dissolve. Having done this, He watched over us when we were bond-slaves to the tyrant Satan. Graciously He guarded us from going still further into transgression and committing the sin which is unto death. Then He called us, and when we would not come He drew us yet more forcibly by His effectual grace, till at last we yielded. Oh, I cannot tell all that He did for us when we at last came to Jesus, but this I know, He washed us, and we were whiter than snow. He brought forth the best robe and put it on us, and made us comely in His sight. He gave us the kiss of sweet acceptance, and He put us among the children, and since then He has given us the children's portion and has dealt with us as He used to deal with those that love His name. We have been adopted into the family, and we have lived on the children's bread, we have been guided, and led, and instructed, and upheld, and sanctified, and the almighty Savior is still performing for us miracles of mercy. The old tale of the giants piling mountain upon mountain, Pelion upon Ossa, is outdone by our God. He has not only heaped up one hill of mercy, but He has laid mountain upon mountain, He has piled up Alps upon Alps to make a pathway for us, that we may ascend to the right hand of God, even the Father, and sit in the heavenly places with Christ. What has He done? I answer, what has He not done? What more could He do? Can you suggest a mercy? He has already given it. Can you desire a favor? It is yours already, and was yours from before the foundation of the world. Oh, the goodness, the manifold goodness, the overflowing, surpassing, inconceivable goodness of God in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

I am bound to dwell a moment on that last word, His kindness toward us *through Christ Jesus*. That is the channel through which all blessing has come to us. God gives common mercies to men as His creatures, but these riches of His grace, these covenant blessings, all come to us as His chosen, through the Mediator. You can see the mark of the cross on every spiritual favor which the Father has bestowed.

Some drops of bloody sweat have fallen upon every treasured gem of the covenant treasure box. And does not this endear the mercy of God to you—that it does come through Jesus Christ? It seems to me to enhance its value, and to make every covenant blessing more, and more, dear, because it is brought to us by the hand of the Well-beloved. By His atonement it is procured to us, and by His matchless intercession it is actually bestowed. Said I not right well that I have a theme which is too deep and high for me? I might detain you many a day upon this one word, “through Christ Jesus,” through the incarnate God, through His life and death and resurrection, and His intercession at the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high. All things come to us through Christ Jesus. He is the golden pipe of the conduit of eternal love, the window through which grace shines, the door by which it enters. Get these two or three words, and sit down and turn them over and over and over in your souls, and see if there is not the very music of heaven sleeping within them, which your faith may call forth, and coin into hallelujahs. “The exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”—this is an anthem worthy of the celestial choirs, sing it, O you chosen of the Lord, while you are waiting to ascend His holy hill.

II. But now I take a step further, and get into the soul of the text. Let us consider—“THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF HIS GRACE.” Here our English is a poor language as compared with the Greek, and I believe that Paul groaned even when he was writing the matchless Greek of the text, because he could not make it express all his meaning. Even the Hebrew, which seems to be the most expressive of all human tongues, and might well have been spoken in Paradise, cannot contain or set forth the fullness of God’s great thoughts, but here the Greek is wonderful. What if I read the words, “the hyperbolical wealth of grace, or the super-abounding, excessive, overflowing riches of the grace of God”? If I were to heap up epithets, I could not give you, all that Paul means. Only notice, first, that the riches of the grace of God are *above all limits*. A man is not rich when he can count his money, or miss this and that when he has spent it. We used to read in our first Latin books, “It is the mark of a poor man to number his flocks,” the rich man has so many sheep that he cannot count them. When a person becomes immensely wealthy, he is richer than he needs to be, and has not only enough, but much to spare. So is it with the grace of God, He has as much grace as you want, and He has a great deal more than that. The Lord has as much grace as a whole universe will require, but He has vastly more. He overflows. All the demands that can ever be made on the grace of God will never impoverish Him, or even diminish His store of mercy. There will remain an incalculably precious mine of mercy as full as when He first began to bless the sons of men. In a country village if a man has a few hundred pounds he is thought to be quite rich. You get into a large town—there a man must have several thousands, but when you come to London, and frequent the Stock Exchange, you inquire of so-and-so, “Is he a rich man?” and someone will perhaps, reply “Yes, yes, he is worth a hundred thousand pounds.” Put that same question to a Rothschild with his millions, and he answers, “No, he is a little man. He is not rich. He only owns a hundred thousand pounds,” for these great bankers count their money by millions. Well, but what are these great Rothschilds with all their millions when they are reckoned up according to the wealth of heaven? They are nowhere at all. The Lord alone is rich. “If I were hungry,” He says, “I would not tell you, for the world is Mine and the fullness thereof.” He says, “The silver and the gold are Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.” God is so rich in mercy that you cannot tell how rich He is. His is overflowing riches, marvelous riches, exceeding riches. God is excessive in nothing that I know of except in His mercy. He has boundless in all His attributes, but emphatically so in His love—for God is Love.

His grace is *above all observation*. The little grace which you have seen—you stop me and exclaim, “Sir, I have seen great grace.” So you have, for you, but the little grace you have seen, I say, bears no proportion to the glorious whole. You have not seen as much of God’s grace as a man might see of the sea if he stood upon the beach at Brighton or at Hastings. “Why,” you reply in surprise, “I can see as much of the ocean there, as any mortal man can see.” That may be, but men’s eyes have but a narrow range. I tell you, you have never beheld the sea, but only a trifling portion of it. If a man crosses from America he has gazed upon a narrow furrow along which his vessel has plowed its way, but no one has ever beheld to the full, the vast, majestic ocean in all its length, and breadth, and depth. Nobody can see it in all its far-resounding shores and hollow caves. Such is the “exceeding riches” of God’s grace, unsearchable, passing knowledge. Oh my poor tongue, and my dull language. I must leave my subject, for

it overflows my soul and drowns my speech. You must think it out for yourselves. The grace of God surpasses all you know, all you see, and all you think.

So I remark next that this grace is *above all expression*, yes even, inspired expression. Paul, though full of the Holy Spirit, could not speak out all the love of God in Christ Jesus, for His love is unspeakable. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable grace." If we had all the tongues of men, and of angels, we could not declare all the riches of the grace of God. No, if all the orators that ever lived made this their one and only theme, and if all of these were under the influence of the divine Spirit, yet human language could not compass this divine thing—

*"Words are but air, and tongues but clay,
And this compassion is divine."*

If we knew the language of angels we could not then declare the grace of God. The most experienced saints bewail the weakness of every form of speech to describe the exceeding riches of the grace of God.

We are compelled to add that it is *above all our ways of action*. The gospel has taught us to forgive, but we do not take to it naturally. If anyone treats us very ill it is with some difficulty that we forgive, but there are certain base, cruel, and ungrateful treatments which it becomes almost impossible to overlook, and if we forgive, yet we do not always forget. But such is the greatness of God's mercy that we who have wearied ourselves with iniquity, and wearied Him with our sins, yet have not outworn His compassion. It is hard for us to pardon, but it is spontaneous with God. He delights in it—"He delights in mercy." Twenty-six times in one psalm the sweet singer proclaims that, "His mercy endures forever." How he rings that bell again, and again, and again, "For His mercy endures forever." Your mercy is very short, and your temper is quick, so that you speak unadvisedly and angrily very soon, but it is not so with God. So wondrous are His ways of grace that they are past finding out. We cannot follow them, and can scarcely believe them because they are so unlike ours. His ways are above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts, as much as the heavens are above the earth. The gentlest, meekest, and most loving minds are left far behind in this race of love. Man is miserly in forgiveness, but the Lord is rich in mercy. Our little stream of goodness runs after much pumping and pressure, but the river of divine love flows freely on.

Yes, and the ways of grace are *above our understanding*. Some famous minds have been born into the world every now and then, men who have explored the sun, threaded the stars, and pried into the heart of the earth, and told us of its ancient history. God raises up every now and then, master minds to perceive and reveal His wisdom in nature. But there never was and never shall be a human understanding that can fully grasp the incomprehensible riches of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Sit down and think it over, and look intently into this mystery, and you will find it far beyond you. "It is high, I cannot attain unto it." I have set myself this day to study this matter, but I have barely touched it as with a swallow's wing. I have not dived into the fathomless depths, neither can I. Jehovah is such a marvelously forgiving God, so rich in His mercy, that our understanding cannot count the mighty sum. Yes, and if our thoughts were raised to the utmost, if we were sanctified to the highest degree, if we were so pure in heart as to see God, not even then should we be able to know all the exceeding riches of His grace to us who believe. The loftiest thought of the most saintly mind never rose to the height of this great argument. The most masterly poetic conception faints, its wing droops, and it falls to earth in the presence of this mercy which is higher than the heavens, and far above the clouds.

I wish I could say something that would make men know how vast the mercy of God is. Oh that these lips had language! Perhaps my failure may be better than fluency. If so, I would gladly be dumb to let mercy itself speak.

Furthermore, dear friends, the exceeding riches of God's grace may be guessed at by the fact that divine mercy is *above all our sins*. You cannot sin so much as God can forgive. If it comes to a pitched battle between sin and grace, you shall not be as bad as God shall be good. I will prove it to you. You can only sin as a man, but God can forgive as a God. You sin as a finite creature, but the Lord forgives as the infinite Creator. When I received that thought fairly into my soul last night, I felt like Abraham when he laughed for joy, I sin like a man, but He forgives like a God. We will never sin that grace may abound, that were infamous and detestable. But what a blessed text is that, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Your sin is like a mountain, but if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed

you shall say to this mountain, “Be you removed hence, and cast into the midst of the sea of God’s infinite mercy,” and it shall be done unto you. The atoning blood will wash out all transgression, and not a trace of it shall remain. Does not this fact magnify the mercy of God? Gross and intolerable as your sin may be, yet it is but as a drop in a bucket compared with the immense ocean of forgiving love.

Try again. God’s mercy is *greater than His promises*. “Oh, no,” you say, “that will not do. We have read of ‘exceeding great and precious promises.’” I tell you His mercy has a glory beyond His promises, for His mercy is the father of His promises. The Lord had mercy and grace before He had spoken a single promise, and it was because His heart was flaming with love that He made a covenant of grace, and wrote therein the words of peace. His promises are precious streams that come leaping up in the deserts of our lost and ruined state, but the depth that lies under, which Scripture calls “the depth that couches beneath,” is richer than the fountain which comes out of it. The mercy of God as the source and the wellhead is greater than the promises which flow from it, infinitely greater than our straitened interpretations of the promises, which fall far short of their real meaning, and even that meaning, did we know it, cannot set forth all “the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

Let us try again. God’s mercy is *greater than all that all His children have ever received as yet*. His redeemed are a multitude that no man can number, and each one draws heavily upon the divine bank, but notwithstanding all the grace He has ever given to them (and He has given to each of them a measureless portion), yet there is more grace in God than He has given forth as yet. “Oh,” you say, “how can that be?” It is so because His mercy is not all given out in this life, much of it is laid up for enjoyment in the world to come. The grace which we have not yet tasted is the very crown of the feast. The Lord has prepared for them that love Him an inconceivable bliss. There is heaven, there is glory, there is all the bliss of the endless ages yet laid up in store. Oh the wealth of these heavenly reserves. I am sure I stated the truth when I said that what the Lord has given does not comprehend all the exceeding riches of His grace, He has infinitely more to give. You have seen the river Thames go rolling along, the abounding and rejoicing river, and you see the cattle come on a hot day and stand knee deep in the stream, and drink, drink, drink. There is more water in the Thames than all the bullocks in all earth’s pastures ever drank, or will drink. They may be driven from every prairie under heaven and stand on the river’s brink and drink as though they would suck up Jordan at a draught, but they will never diminish the wealth of Father Thames. But even if they could, you and I would be still as far off from all possibility of draining the wondrous flood of mercy which comes flowing forth from beneath the throne of God. The rain of grace has filled the pools, but it will rain again none the less plentifully. God’s ability to give is greater than our capacity to receive.

The fact is that this grace is *above all measure*. Yet we have four measures for it—height, depth, breadth, length—and this mercy of God is so exceedingly great that in each of these measures it baffles description. It is higher than our sin, though that is exceedingly heinous and proudly threatens the gates of heaven. It is higher than our thoughts, though our imagination sometimes takes a condor’s flight. Oh, the height of divine mercy! It rises to the throne of the Eternal. As for the depths of grace—the sea has immense depths, but the mercy of God is altogether unfathomable. Great sins sink into it and are lost, but grace is just as deep after it has swallowed up a world’s sin as it was before. There are inconceivably deep places in God’s mercy where the blackest sins are lost. Out of these come the choicest pearls of grace. Oh the depths! As for the breadth of mercy, David says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” What greater breadth can be conceived? As for the length of it, it is from everlasting to everlasting. Can anybody tell me the length of that? My sins began less than fifty years ago, but the Lord’s mercy began—ah, when did it begin? It was always with Him, and His plans of mercy are from everlasting. There is a beginning to man’s sin, but there is no beginning to pardoning love. I shall cease to sin, I hope, long before another fifty years are over, and I shall be beyond fear of further fault, but the mercy of the Lord will never end, world without end. Who then can compass a matter which in any one of its measurements far surpasses all human computation? Grace is above all calculation.

Hasten here, you great sinners. You are not great as compared with the Lord’s great mercy in Christ Jesus. We cannot allow you to apply the word “great” to your sin; we need to reserve it for the mercy of God. We must monopolize the word, for all greatness dwells in the love and mercy of our God. Howev-

er much you may have wandered, however black you may be, however defiled, God delights in mercy, it is the joy of His heart to pass by transgression and sin through the precious blood of Christ. Do not do my Lord so great a dishonor as to measure your sin and affirm that it outstrips His mercy. It cannot be! You know nothing about the glorious nature of my Lord. A child may fill its little cup out of the great sea, but the sea never misses it. Your sin is like that cup, and you may fill it to the brim with mercy, but the ocean of love will never miss all that you can take from it. Come, take all that you can take, and none shall question you. Wash out your crimson stains in this pure flood, and it shall remain as pure as at the first. I would not speak lightly of your sin, it is an exceedingly great and grievous thing, but still I do say over again, that as compared with the infinite mercy of God it is but as a shadow to the sun, or a grain of sand to the full ocean at its flood.

III. These riches of grace deserve TO BE STILL FURTHER ILLUSTRATED and I shall illustrate them only by hints. What exceeding riches of grace it was on God's part that when we resisted Him in the days of our sin *He resolved to overcome our folly*. If you offer a man a great kindness, and he will not have it, you say, "Well, then, he must do without it. I am not going down on my knees to him to ask him to receive a favor from me." Yet the Lord pleads with sinners to accept His grace. "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." He begs and beseeches men that they will be saved. He entreats them, pleads with them, argues with them, that they would turn to Jesus and live. Oh, the exceeding riches of His grace. My Master, the Lord Jesus, came along to me and He said, "Soul, will you have pardon and forgiveness?" And fool that I was, I answered, "No." Then He came again and said, "Will you have Me and My salvation? I will take you to heaven with Me." And I answered, "No." Ah, but He would not take "No" for an answer. He had a sweet way of getting at my understanding and my will, and He drew me till at last I cried after Him. How I ate my black and rebellious words. "O Lord," I said, "take no notice of what Your poor, poor child has said. Throw his obstinate refusals behind Your back, and let me come to You." But, oh, the exceeding riches of His grace that He should stand waiting, waiting long, and knocking at our door though we would not let Him in.

The exceeding riches of His grace were seen in *making no conditions with us*. When the Lord Jesus Christ met with us He did not stand out for terms. I heard someone say the other day, "I do not feel enough brokenness of heart or enough humiliation of spirit." Who said that Christ demanded so much brokenness of heart and so much humbling of spirit before He would give His mercy? He who dared to say it knows not the freeness of the gospel, for the gospel comes to bring you the broken heart and the humbled spirit. And Christ comes to you just as you are, in all your alienation and your enmity, and brings everything in His hands that you can want. This is what we call free grace. A sharp critic said the other day, "Do not say 'free grace,' it is a tautology, grace must be free." Ah, my dear sir, but we shall say "free grace," so that there shall be no mistake about it, for some, I dare say, will not know where we are unless we are redundant in our expressions upon this point. There was nothing in us to draw Christ to us. We had nothing good, but everything evil. When He came He did not say, "Bankrupt sinner, you must pay two pence on the pound, and I will pay the other nineteen and ten pence." He paid all our debts, asking not a farthing from us. He saw us lying by the roadside bruised and broken, and He did not say, "Come here, poor man; rise up, and I will bind your wounds." No, but He came where we were lying unable to stir, and poured in the wine and the oil, and did it all without our help. This is the "exceeding riches of His grace," in not standing stipulating and huckstering with us, but freely giving to us all we need, only asking that we would receive it, that we would be empty, and that He might fill us with His love.

Beloved, I think I never knew "the exceeding riches of His grace" better than when I was thinking, the other day, of *how His grace works*. Why, He does all this with a word. He speaks a black sinner white; He speaks a dead sinner into life by a word. "Live," He says, and he that was dead lives. He that had been accounted unrighteous is, by God's will, reckoned righteous, and he is righteous, for him whom God reckons to be righteous by the imputation of Christ's righteousness is righteous indeed. Yes, and he shall be rewarded for that righteousness which God with a word gives to him.

If you want another proof of "the exceeding riches of His grace" think of the power of the blood. Once washed in the crimson fount, your every sin is gone, every spot is washed out. Yes, and gone never to return, for he that is once washed in the atoning blood will never be black again. The cleansing is

perfected forever. The glorious High Priest made one offering for sin, only one, He did it once, and by that He annihilated all the sins of all His people at a single stroke, once and for all. Oh, “the exceeding riches of His grace,” His word, His blood have worked such wondrous mysteries of grace.

And since then, dear friends, have not “the exceeding riches of God’s grace” been marvelous to you? To think that He should accept us as believers though we had not more than half a grain of faith! He has even treated us as believers when sometimes we have been more doubters than trusters. As for our repentance, it seemed such a poor shallow regret, yet He has reckoned it repentance, and accepted it as such. Our love to Him! Oh, our poor love to Him has been like a spark hiding away in the ashes, yet He has called it love. He has known us better than we know ourselves, and He has known we loved Him notwithstanding the feebleness of our affection. These poor, frail graces of ours that we have been ashamed of, He has nevertheless rejoiced in them, and had a joy in them as being the gift of His Spirit, of “the exceeding riches of His grace.”

Ever since our conversion the Lord has *held on to us*, and helped us to hold on to Him. We have sorely tried Him time out of mind. Sometimes we talk about our trials. There is another side to that. Think of Christ’s trials; how we have grieved Him. We must have provoked His spirit ten thousand times, yet He loves us infinitely, and does not give us up. He has espoused us to Himself, and He will never divorce us. He never sued out a divorce against a soul that was married to Him, nor ever will He. He has not grown cold in His love; notwithstanding our chilliness He loves us now with all His great and infinite heart. And by and by, He will open the golden gates, and He will say, “Come up here”—

*“Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.”*

But if when I get to heaven I shall know what I owed Him here, I shall be in a greater difficulty than ever, for I shall not know what I then owe Him in His glory. It is an enormous debt we owe Him for the blessings of time, and perhaps in eternity we shall begin to calculate their value. But then we shall be sweetly oppressed with a new burden, in a sense of the amazing mercy which He will then be giving us at His right hand. We may give up the endless task. We cannot possibly calculate the sum. Brethren, we are all in an equal difficulty, and shall be so forever, for the Lord will go on to deluge us with mercy, grace, and favor, forever and forever, and we shall say to one another, when millions of years have gone, “Brother, is it not still astonishing? Do you seem to know much more of it than you did in the Tabernacle that morning when you heard the poor preacher try to do his best with his subject, and he was utterly lost in it?” And you will say, “I know far more, but I am as far off as ever from knowing all, for now I know more of my ignorance, I know more of the extent of what I do not know.” Brothers and sisters, if what we do know and what we do not know are added together to make up the total sum of the Lord’s grace, what must it be?—

*“God only knows the love of God:
Oh that it now were shed abroad
In these poor stony hearts.”*

God grant it, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 2.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—786, 233, 202.**

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